OCTOBER 2026

THE FOOD EDITION

The Voices BEYOND

PEOPLE. PERSPECTIVES. POSSIBILITIES.

A LOT ON OUR PLATE!

Our plates are changing.
So are the choices, habits
and technologies shaping them.

AMMA'S RECIPE BOOK

How did one mother's recipes end up feeding thousands?

A THOUSAND KITCHENS. ONE BANGALORE.

What happens when an entire country brings its appetite to one city?

IDLI
BIRYANI
PIZZA
MOMOS
FILTER COFFEE
& MORE...

Recommended for you

You, your cravings... or your algorithm?

FOOD BITE

THE SAMOSA IS OLDER THAN ITS ALOO.

Yes, really.
More inside.

THE KEBAB THAT CHANGED THE PLAN

Would anyone drive all the way to Mahipalpur just for dinner?
They did.

Why do we always save room for dessert?

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Hunger Had Help

The surprising forces behind what ends up on our plate.



Divya Mathew,
Editor-in-Chief

You walk into a supermarket for milk. Simple enough. Except... which milk? Full-fat? Double-toned? Lactose-free? High-protein? Almond? Oat? Soy? At some point, you begin to wonder whether you came for breakfast or a personality test.

Eventually, something makes it into your basket. So does a tub of Greek yoghurt, a packet of chips and a protein chocolate bar that was absolutely, definitely, not on the list. Later, you open a food-delivery app thinking dosa. Then you see the biryani. A Korean bowl appears under *'Recommended for You'*. A pizza is 40% off. The dosa never stood a chance. You chose dinner. Of course you did. But why that milk? That snack? That dinner? Hunger? Probably. But hunger had help.

Today, choosing what to eat can begin long before the first bite. Packaging tells us what to notice. Photographs make us hungry. Prices make one option suddenly look much more delicious than another. Ratings reassure us. And increasingly, an algorithm quietly decides what we see first.

Then there's the person beside you ordering fries. The smell of popcorn at the cinema. The words *'limited-time'* offer. And that extremely persuasive little voice that says - I worked out today, so technically...

Our food choices are personal. They're just not always made alone. So perhaps the interesting question isn't simply what are we eating? It's why did we choose it? And once you begin asking why, food becomes much bigger than food.

THE PACKET SPEAKS FIRST

Sometimes the first thing we consume isn't the food. It's the claim. *High protein. Multigrain. Baked. Natural. No added sugar. Five little phrases*. An impressive amount of persuasion.

In a study involving **1,022 adults,** a cereal with Protein prominently in its name was perceived as healthier and more nutritious than the original version - even though, for an equal one-cup serving, the protein version contained more sugar, sodium and calories.

Researchers call this a **health halo:** one positive characteristic can influence how we judge the entire product. Basically, put a halo on the front of the packet and sometimes we forget to investigate what's happening at the back. And apparently, halos work.

In the same study, only **21.3%** of participants correctly identified which cereal had the larger listed serving size - even though most reported looking at the front-of-pack nutrition information. The packet hadn't lied. Our brains had simply filled in some of the blanks. And when those claims begin appearing on foods meant for children, the choices become even more complicated.

CHOICE CHECK

You see *High Protein*.
Your brain hears: This must be healthier. Your next move? Turn the box around. The back of the packet has entered the chat.

YOUR EARS ARE EATING TOO

Take a potato chip. Bite it. How do you know it's crisp? Your mouth tells you something.
But so do your ears. Researchers altered the sound people heard while biting potato chips. When the crunch sounded louder, people judged the same chips as crisper and fresher. **The chip hadn't changed. The soundtrack had.** Apparently, even snacks benefit from good sound design. And your ears aren't the only ones joining you for dinner.

Your eyes are there. Your nose has opinions. Temperature matters. Texture matters. Appearance matters. Expectation matters.
Even colour can influence what we think we are about to taste. In other words, your tongue gets a remarkable amount of credit for a job it clearly does not do alone. Dinner is a group project.

THE AISLE MOVED INTO OUR POCKETS

Food once competed for our attention on supermarket shelves. Now the supermarket shelf lives in our phones. And this shelf knows things. What you ordered last Friday.
What people near you like. What can arrive fastest. What is Popular Near You. What is 40% off for reasons you suddenly feel no need to question. **The screen doesn't simply show us food. It organises our choices.**

On just one major food-delivery platform, Indians ordered around **93 million** biryanis in 2025. That works out to roughly 194 biryanis every minute. Dosa clocked millions of orders too. So while technology may be transforming the way India eats, some debates remain reassuringly analogue - Biryani or dosa? Please do not expect BEYOND to take sides. And now there is another guest entering the kitchen.

AI

It can suggest dinner, build a meal plan, reinvent leftovers and recommend recipes based on whatever is sitting in the refrigerator. Take a photograph of three tomatoes, half a capsicum, some paneer and one slightly suspicious carrot and AI will confidently tell you that dinner is possible. Useful? Absolutely. A little unnerving? Also yes. Because if AI already knows what is in our fridge, what we like and what we usually eat....how long before it starts asking why we bought the coriander again when we both know how this ends?

HEALTHY HAS BECOME A VERY BIG BUSINESS

Meanwhile, healthy has become one of the busiest words in the supermarket. Around 1 in 5 snacks sold in India now carries a health association, according to NielsenIQ estimates, while health-oriented "smart snacking" formats are growing **1.2 times faster** than traditional formats. Protein cookies. Millet chips. Seed crackers. Greek yoghurt. Electrolyte drinks. Even the humble snack now appears to have a résumé. And protein, in particular, seems to be having a very good decade. It has moved out of the gym bag and into yoghurt, cereal, bread, chocolate, chips and just about anything else with room on the packet. At this rate, we may soon encounter high-protein water and simply accept that this is who we are now. But consumers are asking questions too. In another NielsenIQ survey, **61%** of Indian consumers said they wanted clearer, easier-to-understand product labels, while **51%** said healthier alternatives were too expensive. Which gives us the modern supermarket dilemma: Is it healthy? Is it actually healthy? Can I afford healthy? Will anyone at home eat healthy? And perhaps most importantly - Did I want this before the packet told me I did?

THE ONE MENU NO ALGORITHM CREATED

Yet despite all this choice, technology and nutritional vocabulary, we still want dosa. Dal. Biryani. Curd rice. The pickle made the way someone at home always made it. Ask someone about a favourite food and, sooner or later, they often stop talking about food altogether.
My mother makes...
My father always...
My grandmother used to...
And suddenly we're not talking about ingredients - **We're talking about people.**

No recommendation engine quite knows what to do with the rasam my grandmother made when I was sick. There is no star rating. No Customers Also Ordered. No 40% off. No Trending Near You. **Just memory.**

And perhaps that is what makes food such an interesting way to understand the world around us. Behind a plate can sit a family, a region, a childhood, a profession, a business, a health decision - even an entire generation. A preschooler's plate raises different questions from a teenager's post-workout meal. A grandmother's recipe may contain instructions such as a little, enough, until it looks right and the particularly unhelpful you'll know.

Cooking can be unpaid work at home and a celebrated profession outside it. A dish can travel thousands of kilometres, pick up new ingredients and new accents along the way - and eventually taste completely like home. **That is the world we wanted to explore in this edition of BEYOND.**

Not simply what we eat, but everything that comes with it - health and protein, memory and culture, technology and convenience, restaurants and business, changing family roles, the people who cook for us and the stories that travel with our food.

So yes. You chose what you ate today. But perhaps you didn't choose alone. Hunger was there. So were price, packaging, convenience, your senses, an algorithm - and a lifetime of memories. As you turn these pages, keep these questions with you: *Why this food? Why this habit? Why this memory? Why this choice?* The answer may have surprisingly little to do with hunger. And everything to do with what lies beyond the plate.

THERE'S MORE TO THE STORY. AND YOU'RE PART OF IT.

We've started the conversation. Now we'd love to hear your voice.

JOIN THE BEYOND CIRCLE.
Scan to follow us on Instagram and Facebook. More stories, fresh perspectives and conversations await.

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Amma's Recipe Book: The Best Inheritance

Some inheritances are measured not by what they are worth, but by how many lives they continue to touch.



Dr. D. A. Kalpaja,
Chairperson,
Vydehi Group of Institutions

When I think of inheritance, I do not first think of property, jewellery, money or possessions.

I think of an old recipe book. It belonged to my Amma. Its pages were worn with use, its handwriting familiar, and between those handwritten recipes lay something far more valuable than instructions for cooking. They carried Amma's understanding of people—what to serve someone who was unwell, how to make a guest feel welcome, how food could comfort, nourish and quietly say, I care for you. It was perhaps the finest inheritance I ever received.

Amma taught me that food was never merely about satisfying hunger. Ingredients mattered, but so did freshness, cleanliness, balance, timing and, above everything else, the intention with which a meal was prepared.

Years later, when my world expanded from our home to hospitals, colleges and schools, I realised how deeply I had carried Amma's kitchen with me.

In our hospitals, her philosophy acquired an entirely new meaning. The person receiving a meal could be ill, anxious, recovering or in pain. Food was no longer simply breakfast, lunch or dinner—it became part of healing. Amma's simple wisdom remained relevant: **make it fresh, make it appropriate, make it nourishing, and never forget the person for whom you are preparing it.**

Then came our colleges. Thousands of young people, long academic days, different backgrounds and different tastes. The kitchen became larger, the quantities multiplied and systems became necessary. Yet the purpose remained unchanged: food should nourish, provide energy and, somewhere in a demanding day, offer a little feeling of home.

Perhaps nowhere has Amma's inheritance been more visible to me than in our schools. Children are wonderfully honest food critics. They don't understand institutional catering - and thankfully, they shouldn't have to. They simply know whether something tastes good and whether they would like another helping.

Over the years, Amma's recipes naturally evolved. Handfuls became kilograms. Family meals became thousands of meals. Nutrition standards, hygiene protocols, allergies, age groups, modern equipment and carefully planned menus became part of the process.

But the soul remained untouched.

That is what I have come to understand about inheritance. Its value is not always in preserving something exactly as we received it. Sometimes its greatest value lies in allowing it to grow.

Amma could never have imagined that the wisdom of her kitchen would one day travel through hospitals, colleges and schools, touching thousands of lives.

Her recipe book taught me something no management textbook ever could:
You may feed thousands, but you must never cook as though you are feeding a crowd. You are always feeding one person at a time.

I inherited Amma's recipes. But my greatest inheritance was her way of caring for people.



My Great Kebab Story

How a location problem in 1990s Delhi became the beginning of a dining experience that travelled far beyond it.



Ashna Kapur,
Managing Director,
Umak Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.

Some of the most enduring ideas don't begin with a grand business plan. They begin with a problem.

Ours began in Mahipalpur. In the late 1990s, Delhi was a very different city. Our Radisson Hotel stood on NH-8, far from what was then considered the heart of Delhi. We faced a simple but daunting question: **why would someone drive all the way to Mahipalpur just to have dinner?**

The answer couldn't be another restaurant. It had to be an experience. That challenge became the seed of **The Great Kabab Factory.** We knew we didn't need to reinvent Indian food - its traditions were already extraordinarily rich. What we could reinvent was the way people experienced it. **Kebabs became our canvas.**

We explored recipes and cooking traditions from across the Indian subcontinent.

A kebab didn't necessarily mean something coming out of a tandoor. It could be cooked on a sighri, tawa or mahi tawa, fried in a kadhai, steamed, grilled on stone or roasted in a tandoor.

Then came the idea that changed the dining experience: instead of guests going to a buffet, the feast would come to them.

One kebab followed another at the table, with unlimited servings and a different menu every day. After the kababs came dal, biryani, Indian breads, vegetables and desserts. It was generous, theatrical and, for its time, wonderfully unconventional.

Then came the real test - *Would Delhi make that drive?*

It did. People began travelling to Mahipalpur specifically to dine at The Great Kabab Factory. Ironically, the location that had forced us to think differently became almost irrelevant. What started as a restaurant inside a hotel was becoming a destination in itself. As TGKF grew, research became fundamental to us. Recipes were discovered, developed, tested and preserved. Closely guarded family recipes passed down through generations became part of an extraordinary recipe bank numbering in the hundreds.



The Galauti and Burrah became signatures, but the philosophy was always larger than any individual dish: preserve tradition while continually creating discovery.

Soon, people wanted TGKF in other cities. The concept moved beyond its original home into standalone restaurants, across India and eventually overseas. What had begun as an answer to a location problem had grown into an Indian restaurant brand.

Looking back, I don't believe TGKF succeeded simply because people love kebabs.

It succeeded because people remember experiences. The changing menus. The endless courses arriving at the table. The aromas, the theatre, the anticipation of what would come next. Dinner became more than a meal. It became a memory.

Nearly three decades later, that remains the most satisfying part of this journey. We began by wondering how we could bring people to our restaurant. Instead, we created a restaurant that people wanted us to take to them.

That is The Great Kabab Factory. And for me, it will always be more than a restaurant. It is a brainchild I watched grow up.

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The First Five Years On A Plate

Before children learn about nutrition, they are already learning how to eat, what feels like home — and how big the world can be.



Zeba Saudagar,
Headmistress and
Early Years Professional

A four-year-old in Bengaluru might begin the day with idli, taste a friend's seaweed snack at school and ask for pasta at dinner. Another may have recently arrived from Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai or London, bringing a different idea of what breakfast, lunch or comfort food looks like.

To us, these are simply meals. **To a young child, they are helping construct an entire food world.**

Long before children understand protein, fibre or calories, they are learning what food means. Which tastes feel familiar? Is something unfamiliar exciting or worrying? What does my family eat? What do other families eat? Can I recognise when I'm hungry — and when I've had enough?

Perhaps the first five years aren't simply about feeding a growing body. They are about building a relationship with food.

"I DON'T LIKE IT!"

Parents know the declaration well — sometimes before the food has even been tasted. But a first refusal doesn't necessarily mean the end of the story.

Research suggests repeated exposure can help young children become more accepting of unfamiliar foods.

A child can smell something unfamiliar. Touch it. Help prepare it. Watch someone else eat it. Taste a little — or decide they aren't ready to. *"I don't like it" can sometimes simply mean "I don't know it yet."* Children learn by encountering, exploring and repeating. Food is no different.

DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF NORMAL

What does *"normal food"* look like to a four-year-old? That depends on where and how they have grown up.

One family might serve dosa and sambar. Another, rice, soup and side dishes. Elsewhere it could be congee, steamed buns, bread and cheese, noodles or eggs.

Bring these children together and **they encounter different versions of normal.**

A Japanese child may recognise rice but see it prepared differently. A Korean child familiar with fermented foods may encounter the fermentation behind idli and dosa. An Indian child might see seaweed in a friend's lunchbox for the first time.

Adults see cuisines and nationalities. Young children often begin with questions. *What's that? Do you eat that at home? Can I try it?*

Food can become one of a child's earliest introductions to cultural difference. For globally mobile children, familiar food can also provide continuity. Moving countries can mean a new home, language, school, routines and friendships all at once.

The taste of home can become an anchor while everything else is new.

The goal isn't to replace that familiarity, but to build from it: enough familiarity to feel secure and enough exposure for the child's world to expand.

FOOD IS SOMETHING CHILDREN DO

Eating in the early years is intensely sensory. *Crunchy. Soft. Smooth. Sour. Warm. Cold.*

Food becomes more meaningful when children participate — washing tomatoes, peeling a banana, stirring batter, kneading dough or serving themselves.

These tiny tasks give a young child something important: "I can do this myself." Like most independence, independence around food begins with small opportunities.

WHEN FOOD ALSO MEANS SAFETY

For some families, exploration comes with another consideration: **food allergies.**

A food allergy isn't the same as disliking something. It involves an immune response and can sometimes be serious.

Scientific thinking around allergy prevention has evolved too. The landmark LEAP study involving high-risk infants helped change thinking about peanut allergy, demonstrating substantially lower incidence among children assigned to early peanut consumption than avoidance.

This doesn't mean every child should be introduced to allergens in the same way; individual medical guidance matters.

In a multicultural environment, there is a wider lesson. Sesame, soy, dairy, wheat, egg, nuts, fish and shellfish appear differently across cuisines.

Food inclusion must sit alongside food exploration. Understanding allergies is part of helping every child participate safely without making them feel different.

> ***Children don't learn about food only from what's on their plate. They watch us.***

AND THEN THERE IS US

Children don't learn about food only from what's on their plate. **They watch us.**

They hear adults call foods "good" or "bad". They notice when dessert becomes a reward. They see whether we try something unfamiliar — or reject it ourselves. They also see recipes passed down, dishes shared and conversations unfolding around a table.

WHO's responsive-feeding guidance emphasises responding to children's hunger and fullness cues, encouraging self-feeding rather than forcing them to eat.

So perhaps the question isn't always, *"Have you finished everything?"*

Sometimes it might be, *"Is your tummy telling you that you've had enough?"*

Success isn't raising a child who eats everything. It is raising one who approaches food with curiosity rather than fear, familiarity without rigidity and independence without pressure. A child who recognises the taste of home - but isn't afraid to taste the world.

Because the first five years don't only shape what children eat.

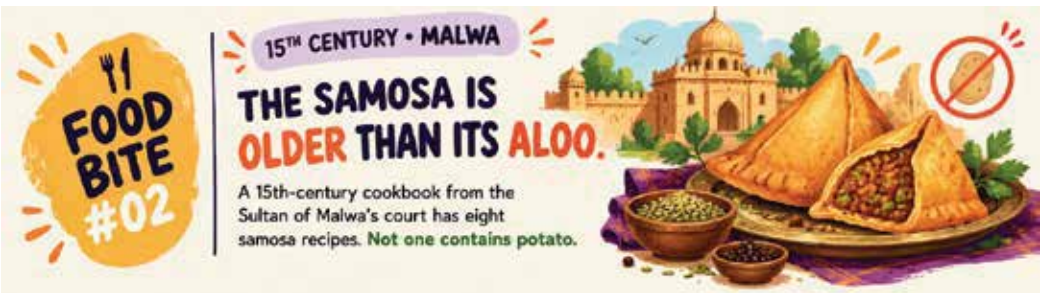
They begin to shape how children relate to food — and to a world much bigger than their own plate.

WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US



Research sources: UNICEF; WHO (2023); USDA Systematic Review; LEAP Study (NEJM, 2015).





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The City With One Big Heart and a Thousand Kitchens

How Bangalore found room at its table for everyone.



Harjeet Kakkar,
CEO, Vhire4u | Vydehi School of Excellence | IMPS | SourcePartner | Wish2fly | CampusMedicine, and Proud Pet Parent

I remember Whitefield in the late 1990s and early 2000s rather differently. Finding food wasn't difficult. Finding my kind of food sometimes was. There was wonderful dosa, idli, vada, sambar and rice. But some evenings, the North Indian in me wanted dal, paneer, a familiar sabzi and a good roti.

ME: *Dal makhani?*
WAITER: *No, sir.*
ME: *Paneer?*

Sometimes the pause answered before the waiter did.

Whitefield was quieter then. The glass towers hadn't conquered its skyline. Bangalore's technology revolution had begun, but the great migration accompanying it was still gathering momentum. I didn't know it then, but the city's menu was about to become its biography.

INDIA ARRIVED. HUNGRY.

Engineers, scientists, students, entrepreneurs and families came from across the country. And they brought their kitchens. Andhra brought gongura, podis and fiery meals. Punjab and Delhi brought chole, rajma, paneer and parathas. Mumbai brought pav bhaji. Gujarat brought dhokla and thepla. Kerala brought appam and stew. Rajasthan brought dal-baati.

Bangalore didn't merely accommodate these cuisines - it acquired an appetite for them. Karnataka, meanwhile, continued feeding everyone with bisi bele bath, ragi mudde, akki rotti, avarekalu, holige, masala puri, filter coffee and its remarkable dosa traditions.

The city even changed how we ate. The Darshini model turned breakfast into urban choreography: **Pay. Collect. Stand. Eat. Coffee. Go.** Western fast food offered the burger. Bangalore answered: *"Masale dose. Two minutes."*

THEN THE RECIPES STARTED TALKING

Bangalore didn't keep these cuisines in separate boxes. They rubbed shoulders. Donne biryani developed its distinctive Karnataka personality. Masala puri became chaat spoken with a local accent. And Gobi Manchurian became so comfortable here that nobody seems concerned that China might not recognise it.

Today, sit in Whitefield and a menu can casually read: Masala dosa. Chole bhature. Andhra meals. Appam. Donne biryani. Gobi Manchurian. Pizza. Sushi. Thai curry. Filter coffee.

The remarkable thing isn't that all this food is available. It's that it has become ordinary.

BUT FOOD IS ONLY THE METAPHOR

Because Bangalore has done with people what it did with cuisines. Kannada met Hindi. Telugu met Tamil. Malayalam met Punjabi. People from Kolkata, Kochi, Jaipur, Delhi and Hyderabad began sharing offices, neighbourhoods—and lunch tables.

India fed Bangalore with its people. And Bangalore fed India back. With jobs, technology and entrepreneurship. With aerospace, biotechnology, research, education and innovation. And with something harder to measure on a balance sheet - integration.

Of course, my beautiful Bangalore isn't perfect. Traffic tests our patience. Growth has stressed its infrastructure. Its precious lakes and greenery demand protection. Yet it retains its wonderful weather, its energy, its opportunity - and its remarkable ability to make newcomers feel less like newcomers.

Nearly three decades ago, I came here searching for my kind of food. Today, Bangalore is home. And I'm no longer quite sure what "my kind" means.

Perhaps that is Bangalore's finest recipe - Bring different ingredients together. Don't erase their individual flavours. Let each contribute something. And make the whole richer than its parts.

It works for food. It works for a city.
And my beautiful Bangalore shows us how beautifully it can work for India.

Food, In Their Own Words



There's something about that first spoonful of warm dal and rice that feels like coming back home, even when home is miles away. It's simple, familiar, and somehow manages to make even an ordinary day feel a little brighter.

Priyanka | Student MBA HR, NMIMS Mumbai

For me, it's my mom's chicken curry and rice, it instantly feels like home. And a generous dollop of ghee on top just makes it pure comfort.

Shreya Pranit | Co-founder, Malava Hands Co.





There's something about fish fry with moru curry that takes me straight back to childhood. It's the kind of meal that brings back memories of home with the very first bite.

Martin Mathew | Sales Leader

My mother makes the best prawns I've ever tasted. And that's saying something — as a food entrepreneur, I've tasted countless dishes, but nothing quite matches hers.

Sudhir | Food Entrepreneur





Soup made by my daughter always takes me back to cold winter days — a warm bowl in my hands, the family together, and that wonderful feeling of being cared for.

Sreeramjan | Grandparent

For me, home tastes like luchi with aloo bhaja or sada aloo sobji. It takes me straight back to lazy Sunday mornings, luchis frying and everyone gathered around the table.

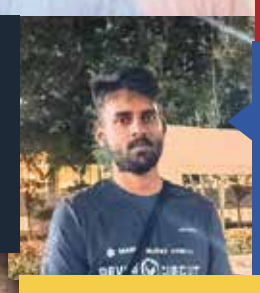
Sudipta Roy | Special Educator





Nani's halwa is my instant mood-lifter. One warm spoonful and somehow the whole day already feels better.

Aryan | Grade 8



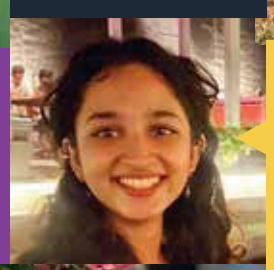
My sister's Oriental food has become one of those flavours I always associate with home. No matter how many versions I try elsewhere, hers is still the one I look forward to coming back to.

Abhishek | Engineer, Qualcomm



One food tradition I want my children to carry forward? Having at least one meal at home, rather than always eating out. There's something about eating together at home that I hope they never lose.

Anindita Mahapatra | Vice President, Mercedes



Honey chilli potatoes! I've loved them since I was four or five. I'd come back from playtime and have them almost every evening. So even now, they instantly remind me of those childhood days.

Reva Mehta | University Student



Give me my mom's dal and vegetables any day. They may be simple, everyday food, but for me, that's exactly what comfort tastes like.

Ranjitha | Homemaker

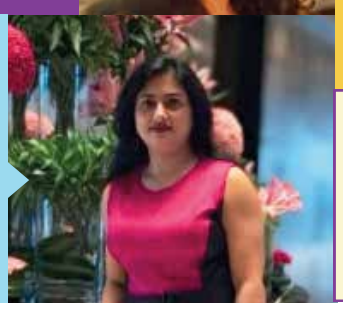
My brother and I are always happiest when Dad's making sandwiches. Somehow, his just taste better than anyone else's!

Priya | Grade 6



I love cooking different cuisines for my family and seeing their reactions. Those smiles make all the effort worthwhile. Food really does have a way of bringing us together.

Antara | Teacher



Your Turn. What's the one food that takes you straight back to childhood?

A smell. A dish. A Sunday lunch. Something only home gets right. Scan. Find the post. Tell us in the comments.

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Protein Please!

How Much Is Enough for a Growing Child?



Shruti Chatterjee,
Editorial Board

When I think back to childhood, I don't remember anyone talking about protein.

There were no protein bars in the kitchen, no powders waiting beside the breakfast cereal and certainly no one checking a label to see how many grams were in a snack. What I do remember is food. A lot of it was wonderfully ordinary — dal, rice, vegetables, curd and milk, but also eggs, fish and meat. Protein was simply part of the meal, not something we consciously tried to "add". That feels very different from the world children are growing up in today.

Walk through a supermarket and **"high protein"** seems to be everywhere — on cereals, yoghurts, snack bars and drinks. Social media, fitness culture, nutrition apps and wearables have added another layer, making us far more conscious of what goes into our bodies.

That shift is real. A 2025 NielsenIQ study found that **53% of Indian consumers surveyed were actively taking steps to improve their health and wellness**, while 64% said detailed product information and claims mattered to them. For parents surrounded by all this information, it leaves one surprisingly simple question: **How much protein does my child actually need?**

A CHILD ISN'T A MINIATURE ADULT

Protein is essential for growth and development. It helps build and maintain muscles, bones and other tissues and supports many functions within the body. But **more isn't automatically better.** A child's needs change with age, body size, growth and activity. A preschooler is not a miniature teenager — and a teenager who trains intensively may have different needs again.

ICMR-NIN's recommendations place children's protein needs within a much bigger nutritional picture. Its suggested diets for young children include grains, pulses, milk or curd, vegetables, fruits and nuts, with eggs, fish or meat included according to dietary preferences.

In other words, **protein belongs within the plate. It isn't the whole plate.** This is particularly reassuring during the preschool years, when selective or picky eating is common. The American Academy of Pediatrics notes that parents of toddlers and preschoolers often worry about protein, but everyday foods — including beans, lentils, dairy, eggs, nuts and seeds — can contribute to a child's intake.

WHEN FOOD BECAME A NUMBER

That makes today's protein obsession worth pausing over. When I was growing up, a fish curry or chicken dish didn't come with a **"protein-rich"** label. It was simply lunch. Dal wasn't a functional food. An egg wasn't a nutrition hack. Food was food.

Today, packaging can sometimes make ordinary nutrition feel inadequate unless it comes with a number or claim on the front. Better awareness can certainly help families make informed choices — but a protein claim shouldn't stop us from looking at the whole food or the whole diet.

ICMR-NIN's 2024 Dietary Guidelines recommend obtaining good-quality protein through appropriate combinations of foods and specifically caution against using protein supplements simply to build muscle mass. And that becomes particularly relevant as children grow older.

THEN COME THE TEENAGE YEARS

By adolescence, the conversation changes. Growth accelerates. Sport becomes more demanding for some. Gym culture enters their world. Protein shakes, powders and bars can suddenly seem like the obvious next step. But eating more protein does not, by itself, build more muscle. The American Academy of Pediatrics explains that **exercise, rather than simply consuming extra protein, is what increases muscle mass.** Young athletes may have different nutritional demands, but most who eat a healthy, balanced diet do not need protein supplements.

And perhaps that's one of the most useful things we can understand about childhood nutrition: **The needs change because the child changes.** A preschooler learning to try unfamiliar foods, a ten-year-old racing around a playground and a sixteen-year-old training several times a week are not eating for identical bodies or identical lives.

PERHAPS WE'RE ASKING THE WRONG QUESTION

So maybe the question isn't simply: **"How do I get more protein into my child?"** Perhaps it should be: **"What does my child's whole plate look like?"**

Is there variety? Are there pulses, dairy, eggs, fish or meat according to the family's choices? Are vegetables, fruits and grains part of the picture too? Is an active teenager eating enough overall rather than simply chasing protein? For most healthy children eating a varied diet, supplements aren't automatically necessary.

Restricted diets, diagnosed deficiencies or specific medical and nutritional needs are different and should be discussed with an appropriate health professional. Perhaps that's the part of today's protein conversation worth remembering.

When I look back at the food I grew up eating, nobody was counting the grams. Nobody called dal a "protein source" before putting it on the table. Nobody marketed the egg. But perhaps Amma's ordinary plate knew more than we gave it credit for.

Who Said Pink Pastries Are for Girls?

The surprising forces behind what ends up on our plate.



Seemita Bhattacharya,
Editorial Board

At an office farewell, the buffet looked like a celebration of colour - golden biryani, green salads, red curries, soft pink desserts and bowls of bright fruit. As the guests gathered around it, an invisible rule seemed to divide the table.

"Try the lighter dishes. The heavier ones are more for the boys."

Everyone laughed. Harmless humour, right? Perhaps. But such casual remarks often reveal how easily we attach gender to food. We do it with portions, flavours and even colours. Salads are called "light". Meat is "hearty". Desserts are "dainty". Spice is "bold". Somewhere along the way, food begins carrying identities it never asked for.

Dessert, too, can apparently become a matter of gender.

Arjun reaches for a bright pink pastry. There is a brief silence before someone laughs. *"That one?"* He raises an eyebrow. ***"Why? Has the pastry asked for my gender?"***

At the other end of the table, Meera fills her plate with a richly spiced, dark-coloured curry. Someone looks at her in mock surprise. *"That looks rather... strong."* She smiles. ***"Apparently, so am I."***

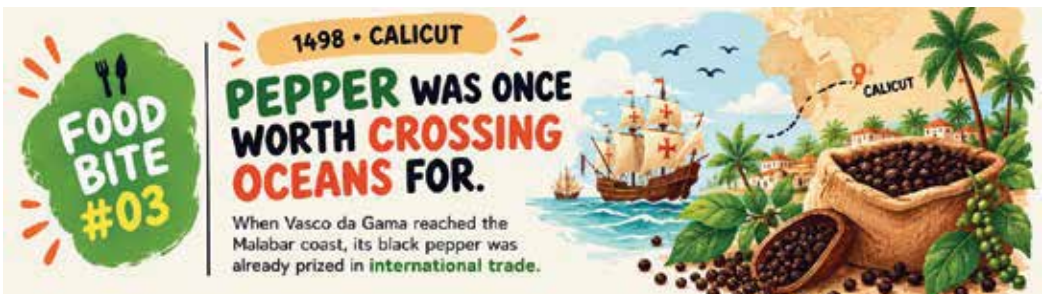


BEYOND THE PAGE

SO... WHEN DID FOOD GET A GENDER?

Pink pastries were just the beginning.

Scan to read the rest





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A Lifetime, Served on a Plate



Dr. Geeta Mathew,
Author and Teacher

My lifelong relationship with food began when I was four years old, when Bhagati uncle, our gardener, taught me to relish a humble bowl of rice and dal — a comforting classic that remains my favourite to this day.

Growing up, Calcutta was a true paradise for any food lover. Evenings were spent near the riverside with cousins, watching boats glide past while devouring chicken rolls stuffed with green chillies and onions from Nizam's — an iconic flavour no one could ever replicate.

Just outside New Market, food was an adventure. We trailed behind Mummy past flower vendors as we popped almond macarons from Nahoum's, the famed Jewish bakery, into our mouths. We picked up spiced potato chips from Kapur uncle's shop, cheese patties and tiny mincemeat samosas.

Back home, family evenings meant soft sandesh or singaras from Mithai, strawberry ice-cream sticks from street vendors on hot summer nights, or rich biryani and haleem sent over by our neighbour, Pappu's mother. Even our cook, Akhtari, made a simple potato and tomato bhaji that vanished the second it left the stove.

Summers offered a delightful contrast, spent in Kerala at our grandparents' homes.

In Kumarakom, we sat by the riverbanks eating appams and fish stew after Sunday service. In Pattazhy, meals simmered over slow wood fires.

We watched in fascination as Bharathi, the cook, ladled sambar, avial and thoran over steaming rice on banana leaves. Between meals, our grandfather, Appachen, made sure we were spoiled with fresh banana fritters, coconut ladoos and sweet tender coconut water.

Family dining out was its own ritual.

On Second Saturdays, we drew lots to choose between stuffed naans and chicken dopiaza at Amber, or American chopsuey and sweet-and-sour prawns at Jimmy's Kitchen — always ending with a softie cone from Frosty's.

Decades later, those golden days have given way to doctor-mandated restrictions on fried foods and sweets. Yet the rich aromas and vivid memories remain forever etched in my mind. Best of all, I can still return to where it all started: **a simple bowl of rice and dal, served with a generous dollop of ghee.**

Tastes, Tales & Memories



Viritha Vallabhaneni,
Vice Principal,
Vydehi School of Excellence

Food, for me, has always been more than food. It is a memory.

I remember waking up to the sound of my mother making hot chapattis before school. My lunchbox was never just lunch; it was a little bit of her love, packed with care.

At school, friends would gather and open their boxes — flavoured rice, chapattis, curries, sweets and pickles, all shared. Those simple exchanges taught me how easily food can start conversations and bring people together.

As I grew older, I also began noticing what was left behind on plates. It made me think differently about waste. Every grain carries someone's effort; a full plate should never become a wasted plate.

Today, when I look at my plate, I see my mother's mornings, my friends' laughter and memories that have stayed with me.

Perhaps that is what food gives us - something to enjoy, something to share and something to value.



Life, Served in Courses

How the food on my plate changed as I did.



Radhika Jaikumar,
Editorial Board

Food was never just food. It changed as I did. From Amma's kitchen to my own, food has quietly been part of every chapter of my life.

Growing up in a South Indian family, some of my happiest memories centred around food. Fluffy pooris, crispy dosas, hot paniyarams (paddu) and soft, pillowy idlis were part of our everyday happiness. And, of course, there were the sibling battles - who got the fluffiest poori or who had eaten the most dosas!

Then came hostel life, when we longed for home-cooked meals and the familiar flavours of Amma's kitchen. Yet food found new ways to comfort us - a rainy evening with hot pakodas or a steaming bowl of Maggi shared with friends could feel like a warm hug.

Work life changed the plate again. Between deadlines and busy schedules, bread sandwiches, muesli and ragi malt became practical choices for rushed mornings. But a lunch with friends or a shared cup of tea could still make an ordinary day memorable. And then came motherhood.

Suddenly, food wasn't only about what tasted good. I began thinking about what was good for my children too — soaking nuts and seeds, adding sweet potato or spinach to pooris and quietly tucking extra vegetables into rolls.

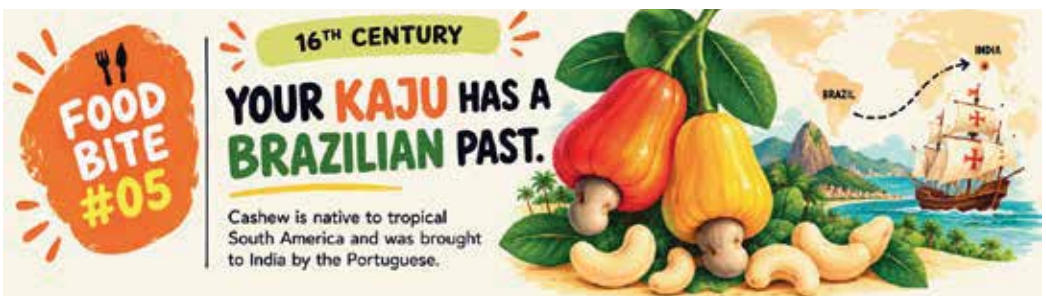
Of course, my children aren't always convinced! Every morning, I still find myself chasing my daughters around with their amla shots. And the "perfect" healthy ladoos I once made with nuts, dates, anjeer and makhana? They didn't consider them edible. I ate the entire batch myself - for weeks.

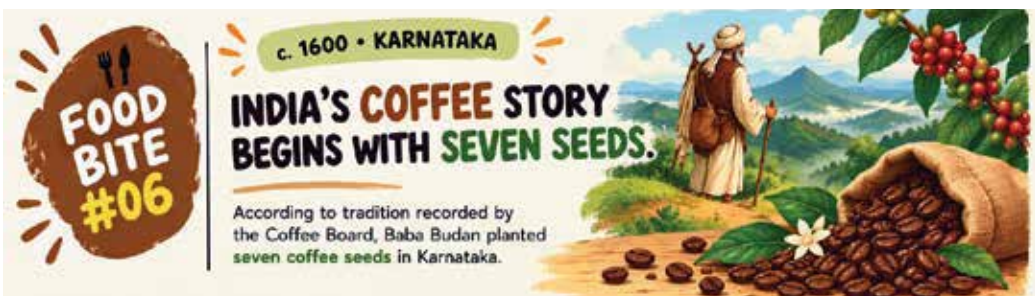
Perhaps that's when I began to understand what Amma must have gone through. The food battles haven't disappeared. They've simply changed generations.

Today, as a yoga enthusiast, I happily choose simple, wholesome, sattvic, home-cooked meals, while my daughters gravitate towards pizzas, pastas, fajitas and burritos. Different generations. Different tastes. Different plates. But still, one shared table.

Looking back, every stage of my life has had its own flavour. And now, standing in my own kitchen, I sometimes find myself doing the very things I once watched Amma do.

Perhaps that is the real beauty of food. We don't just grow up eating it. We grow up with it.





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DO YOUR MORNINGS TURN YOUR WORLD UPSIDE DOWN?

"I handle emergencies all day, But the morning lunchbox rush? That's a different emergency!

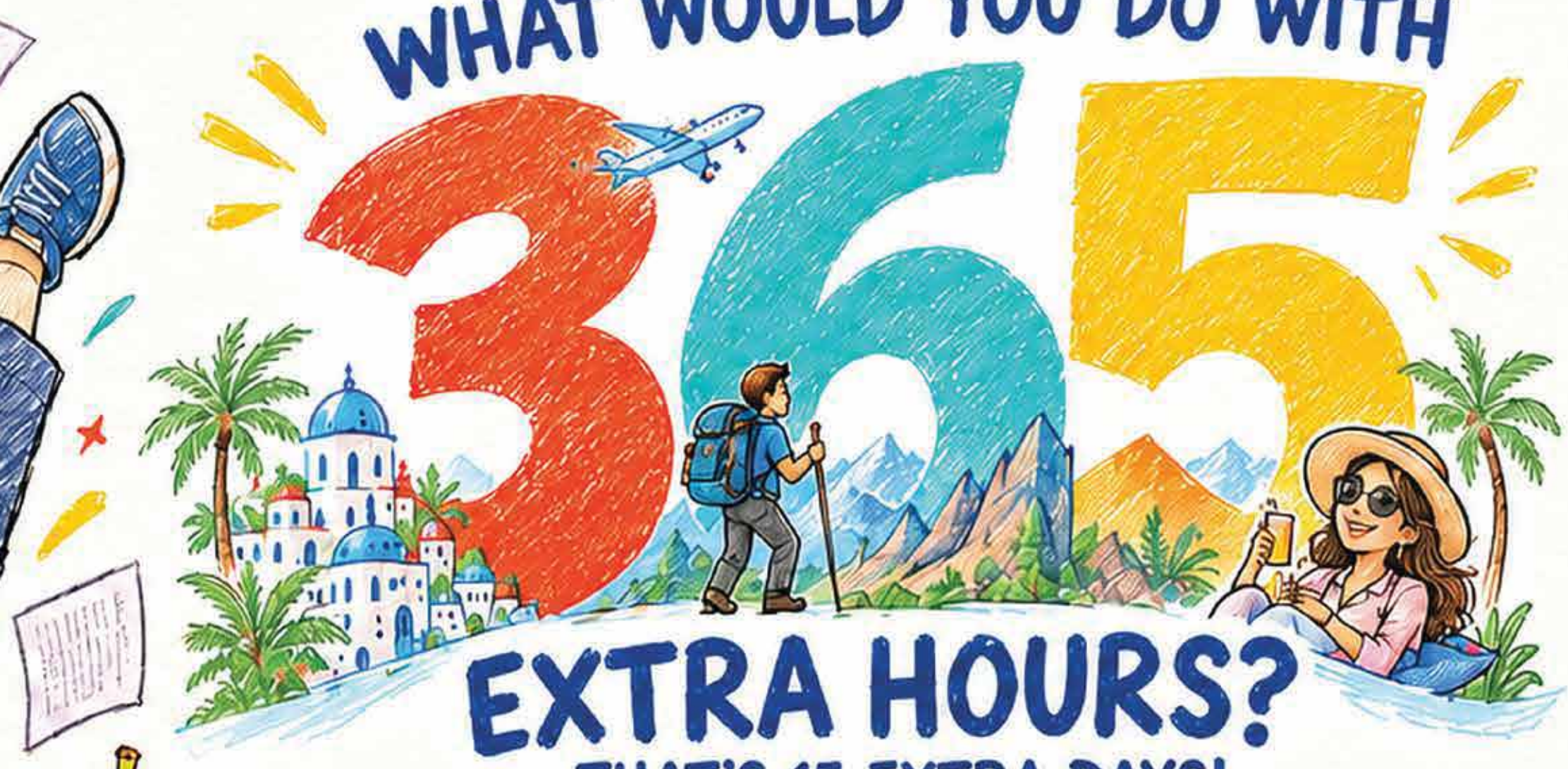
"I've automated everything at work. If only I could automate the lunchbox!'

"I run an entire business. Yet somehow, the breakfast rush runs me!"

"I love cooking for my family. Just not against the clock every single morning!

WHAT IF ONE THING WAS TAKEN OFF YOUR MORNING TO-DO LIST?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH



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Community Voices

Postcard From Seoul

One trip. One dish. One delicious memory.



Papia Das,
Teacher

Dear Food Diary,

Seoul, 2020.
I still remember the Cheese Dakgalbi arriving at our table - chicken, vegetables and rice cakes in a spicy gochujang-based sauce, covered with melting cheese and cooked right in front of us.

But my favourite part? Wrapping each bite in a fresh green leaf before eating it.
Spicy. Cheesy. Crunchy. Completely new.

There was Gyeranjjim, a soft Korean egg custard, on the side too. But more than the dishes, I remember the fun of discovering a completely different way of eating together as a family.

Funny how some of our best travel memories fit into a single bite.



Bernita Elangovan, Grade IX

Journey of a Grain of Rice

How the food on my plate changed as I did.



Paromita Mitra,
Editorial Board and Teacher

I was born somewhere. But along the way, I became many things. My journey has taken me through kitchens, trade routes and family homes. Everywhere I went, people welcomed me — then added a little of themselves.

In Hyderabad, I met spices, meat and the slow, fragrant technique of dum cooking. In Lucknow, I took on the delicate flavours and refinement of Awadhi cuisine. Then came Kolkata. *"Dada, wait! Where are the aloo and dim?"* And just like that, a golden potato and boiled egg joined the party. I had another identity - one that Kolkata would proudly make its own.

Further south, I reached Karnataka, where different local flavours and cooking traditions welcomed me into yet another food culture. And then someone asked - *"Why should biryani need meat at all?"* Into the pot went colourful vegetables, fragrant rice and aromatic spices. Another version of me had found a home. **Everywhere I travelled, I heard the same thing - "This is our biryani."**

Perhaps that is the magic of food. Recipes travel with people. They meet new ingredients, tastes and traditions. They change. They adapt. And somewhere along the way, something borrowed can become something deeply personal.

So who owns biryani? Maybe the more interesting question is - How many stories can one dish carry? **Because as I travelled, I didn't lose my identity. I collected new ones.**

AMMA'S RECIPE

- ***A little of this*** ✓
- ***A little of that*** ✓
- ***Taste and adjust*** ✓
- ***Measurements*** X
- ***Recipe book*** X
- ***Andaaz*** ✓✓✓

No Recipe. Just Andaaz.

Some of the best recipes were never written down.



Vuriti Jyoshna,
UKG Teacher

When I think about my childhood, I remember standing beside my mother in the kitchen, watching her cook.

She never used a recipe book. There were no measuring spoons or carefully written instructions.

She cooked by अंदाज़ (andaaz) — by instinct, by feel.
A little of this.
A little of that.
And somehow, it always turned out perfect.

I remember coming home and smelling her cooking even before I reached the door. We would sit together, talk about our day and eat while the food was still warm. Back then, it felt completely ordinary.

Only now do I realise how special those ordinary meals were. It is the kitchen. The conversations. The people around the table. And a mother who somehow knew exactly how much was "enough" without ever measuring it. Maybe that was her real recipe all along.

The Flavours We Should Never Forget

We can taste the world without losing the recipes that taste like home.



Vijaya,
Mom and Homemaker

Food is far more than something we eat; it carries our culture, identity, and memories. Shaped by land, climate, and local ingredients, regional flavors tell the story of where we come from.

Today, our tables are changing. In a globally connected world, global cuisines are just a tap away. Our children enjoy unprecedented access to diverse flavors, which is something to celebrate. But as we explore the world through food, are we remembering to pass down the flavours of our own homes?

Our strongest food memories rarely come from restaurants. They are tied to the aroma of a mother or grandmother's cooking, a dish served every festival, or a meal made without measurements—prepared simply out of love. These dishes do more than nourish us; they give us a sense of belonging.

Our children deserve those memories too. Years from now, they will recall pizzas with friends and meals at restaurants, but they should also remember the comfort food made when they were tired or a parent's signature home-cooked dish.

Recipes preserve more than ingredients and cooking techniques—they preserve people. A family recipe carries the habits, stories, and love of those who cooked it before us.

So by all means, let us celebrate the world's flavours and encourage our children to embrace new cuisines. But let us also gather them in our own kitchens. Hand them the worn spoon, pass down the dishes born in our homes, and tell them the stories that make each bite sacred. Write these recipes down and cook them together with love.

Because one day, long after our hands have left the kitchen, the simple taste of home may be the most precious comfort they carry in their hearts.



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Charles Gabriel,
Leadership Consultant

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THROUGH THEIR EYES

Every Plate Has a Shadow



Moukthika Bella,
Editorial Board | Grade IX

We usually notice what's on a plate - the rice, the vegetables, the little something sweet on the side. We notice what we like, what we don't, and what we wish there was more of.

But recently, I realised something: **every plate has a shadow too.** Behind it is someone who woke up early to cook. Someone who remembered exactly how much salt you like. Someone who tasted the food, added a little something, tasted it again and finally said, "Okay, now it's perfect."

It's in the little things too - your favourite piece quietly kept aside, an extra helping because you looked hungry, a dish made again because you said, "I liked it yesterday."

None of these things make it into a recipe. **But maybe they're the reason food can feel so much like home.**

Hidden in the Spice Box

Sometimes, one familiar smell can take you home.





Mithraa M,
Grade VI

Whenever my mom starts making rasam or sambar, the smell of curry leaves fills the house. That one smell instantly reminds me of my grandmother and our native place. Even though we live in a completely different house now, the taste and aroma are exactly the same. **It feels like our family's history is hidden inside our spice box.**

A lot has changed around me. We order burgers, pizzas and takeaway, and sometimes eat quickly while watching TV or our phones. But when my mother or grandmother cooks, it feels different. **A simple bowl of rasam rice doesn't just taste like food. It tastes like home.**

A Plate That Tastes Like Home

Why Amamchi's appam and stew never taste quite the same anywhere else.



Suzanne Matson,
Editorial Board | Grade IX

There's always that one plate of food that brings back memories of home. For me, it's **Amamchi's appam and stew.**

The moment I see those soft, fluffy appams next to a bowl of warm, creamy stew, I'm not just thinking about food. I'm thinking about Kerala, family and all those moments spent around the dining table.

Every time I reach Kottayam, I already know what is waiting for me. **Appam.**

There's this feeling of anticipation that all of us cousins share. It doesn't matter who is arriving or what day it is — somehow, there's always appam. The moment we hear someone is coming over, we already know what will probably be served for breakfast. And when we finally sit around the dining table, I realise it isn't just about eating.

It's the excitement of sitting together, waiting for the first batch to come out and watching everyone reach for their favourite pieces. There's always someone asking for *"just one more,"* someone trying to get the softest and crispiest appam, and someone reminding everyone to leave some for the rest of us.

Maybe that's why appam and stew taste different in Kerala. It isn't just the recipe or the taste. **It's the place, the people, the conversations and the memories that come with it.**

Somehow, one plate of food can make a whole house feel like home.

BEFORE YOU SAY, "SAME FOOD AGAIN..."

A note to self.
Next time I look at my plate and think, *"Same food again?"* Remember how many hands it took to get there.

Someone grew the ingredients.
Someone transported them.
Someone bought them.
Someone washed them.
Someone cooked them.

Someone made sure dinner was warm and ready when I was hungry. I may never know all those people. But I can remember not to take their effort for granted. **The food may look ordinary. The journey to my plate isn't.**



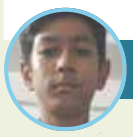
Nalina S, Grade VIII





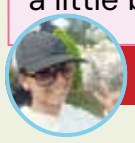
Shanya Singhal, Grade IV

Hot momos on a chilly evening, shared with friends or family, are more than just a meal. They're a comforting little experience I look forward to every single time.



Shiva Mathur, Grade VIII

Some days, my mind feels like a giant knot of thread after a long day at school. But one spoonful of my grandma's rasam somehow untangles it all - bringing comfort, memories and a little bit of home back with it.



Suwasthika , Grade VIII

Dear Future Me,



I hope you still make pasta - the simple kind, with garlic, vegetables and lots of cheese.

Remember the music, the laughter and everyone cooking together. It was never really about getting the recipe right. It was about the people around you.

When life gets busy, slow down. Make some pasta. Put on your favourite music. And if you've forgotten the recipe? **Just add extra cheese.**



Ahaan Kausshik, Grade VIII

Grandma Doesn't Take Shortcuts

One fish curry. Four traditions.



MUD POT
For slow, even cooking.

SILBATTA
Coconut, chillies, ginger, garlic & spices are ground the traditional way.

FRESH MASALA
Instead of ready-made powdered masalas.

RED RICE
The way the family serves the curry.

Some family recipes aren't only passed down through ingredients. They're passed down through the way they're made.



Yashika Pandey, Grade VI

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THROUGH THEIR EYES

When a Bowl of Rice Becomes a Memory

The story of Mullivaikkal Kanji — food shaped by scarcity, survival and remembrance.



Resabeswaran R P,
Grade IX

Food often carries stories of celebration, family and tradition. But sometimes, a dish carries a much more difficult history. **Mullivaikkal Kanji is one such food.**

During the final stages of the Sri Lankan Civil War in 2009, Tamil civilians caught in the conflict around Mullivaikkal faced severe shortages of food and other essentials. With very little available, rice was boiled with large quantities of water, with salt when it could be found. This thin kanji helped stretch a small amount of rice among more people. It was food made not for enjoyment, but for survival.

For many who lived through those weeks, the dish became connected with memories of hunger, displacement, fear and loss. Today, Tamil communities in Sri Lanka and around the world continue to prepare and share Mullivaikkal Kanji around May 18 as an act of remembrance.

Its ingredients could hardly be simpler: Rice. Water. And, when available, salt. Yet behind that simplicity lies an extraordinary weight of memory. **Sometimes, food remembers what history must not forget.**

One Lentil, Many Stories



Dal with rice,
a simple meal,
something so common,
yet so close to home.

Sometimes dal tadka,
sometimes sambar,
sometimes palak dal—
the same lentils, different stories.

In every home,
it can taste a little different.
A little more spice,
a different recipe,
a different way of making it.

Maybe that's what makes dal special-
it is simple,
but never just one thing.

The same lentils
can become different dishes,
carry different flavours,
and belong to different homes.

One lentil, many stories
and somehow,
each one can taste like home.



Natasha Reddy Kamasani, Grade XI

I Was the Child Who Wouldn't Eat



Tanisha Mookoni,
Grade VII

I have been a picky eater for as long as I can remember. When I was little, feeding me was a challenge my mother knew very well. She was and still is a wonderful cook. She would make all kinds of delicious food for everyone at home, but her little daughter wasn't impressed. I was happiest with my mother's milk and my favourite banana smoothie!

Mealtimes needed a lot of patience. Sometimes, my mother would spend more than an hour trying to feed me. Nobody else could manage it quite like she could. But slowly, as I grew older, something changed. I began trying foods from my native place, Kerala. Onam Sadhya fascinated me. So did the different non-vegetarian dishes made at home. **But what really made me curious wasn't only how the food tasted. It was the stories behind it.**



One of my favourite memories is of Vishu. On Vishu morning, we wake up and keep our eyes closed until we are taken to see the Vishukkani. I remember seeing the arrangement with fruits, vegetables, grains and other things placed beautifully around it. When I was younger, I simply saw food. Then my mother began telling me why the different things were there and what they represented.

Suddenly, I wasn't just looking at fruits, vegetables and grains anymore. I was looking at a tradition. There was a reason behind what had been placed there and a story behind what we were seeing. That made me look at food differently.

I began to understand that food isn't only something we eat because we are hungry. It can tell us where we come from. It can remind us of our family and traditions. It can teach us to value what nature gives us. Perhaps that is how this picky, stubborn little eater slowly became someone who actually loves food. I still have my favourites, of course. But now I know that sometimes, before you decide you don't like something on your plate, it is worth discovering the story behind it.

For me, food has become more than something we need to survive. **It is a memory. A tradition. An emotion. And sometimes, even a connection to God.**

नानी के हाथ का खाना



Shreya Shah,
Editorial Board, Grade VII

नानी के हाथ का खाना मेरे लिए दुनिया की सबसे स्वादिष्ट चीज़ है। उनके हाथों से बना खाना सिर्फ पेट ही नहीं भरता, बल्कि दिल को भी खुश कर देता है। नानी के घर पहुँचते ही खाने की खुशबू से मेरे मुँह में पानी आ जाता है। मेरी नानी मेरे लिए बहुत स्वादिष्ट पानी पूरी बनाती हैं। वह अपने बगीचे से ताज़ी कच्ची कैरी और पुदीना तोड़कर, नींबू और मसालों से स्वादिष्ट पानी तैयार करती हैं। उनकी बनाई पानी पूरी का खट्टा-मीठा और मसालेदार स्वाद मुझे बहुत पसंद है। नानी जब अपने हाथों से मेरे लिए पानी पूरी बनाती हैं, तो उसका स्वाद और भी खास हो जाता है।

आजकल हम तरह-तरह का खाना बाहर से मँगा सकते हैं, लेकिन नानी के हाथ के खाने की बात ही अलग है। उसमें स्वाद के साथ उनका प्यार और अपनापन भी मिला होता है। उनके खाने की खुशबू और स्वाद मुझे हमेशा नानी और उनके साथ बिताए खूबसूरत पलों की याद दिलाते हैं।

If Disaster Had a Flavour...

Burnt edges, sunken cakes and why I keep baking anyway.



Kaashika Chauhan,
Editorial Board, Grade IX

Everyone has that one thing that calms them down. For some, it's colouring, painting or crocheting. For me, **it's baking.**

It started with watching my mother turn simple ingredients into cakes that looked like they belonged in a bakery window. I think that's when the spark caught. Now, every new recipe feels like a tiny adventure — and it doesn't always end well.

I've pulled cakes out of the oven dense enough to double as doorstops. **If disaster had a flavour, I'd have perfected the recipe by now.** But then there are the other times. The cakes that come out soft and melt-in-your-mouth perfect. Those moments make all the flops worth it and send me straight back into the kitchen, apron and all, ready to try again.

Baking has taught me something I never expected a mixing bowl to teach me: **failure is just part of the recipe.** You don't get the perfect cake on the first try. Every burnt edge and sunken sponge is practice in disguise. So maybe therapy sometimes comes with flour, sugar and the courage to try again after cake number one collapses — along with your hopes and dreams.

The Biryani We Wait for. The Sewai We Share



Mohammed Bilal,
Grade IX



On Eid, there are two dishes I always look forward to: chicken tikka biryani and sewai. The biryani announces itself before we even see it. The aroma of spices, rice, ghee and coal fills the house as everyone gathers around the table, waiting for the lid to be lifted. Then there is sewai — a tradition passed down through generations of my family. It is prepared with love and shared with relatives, friends and guests who visit us. Perhaps that is why these two dishes mean so much to me. **One brings everyone to the table. The other is shared around it.** Together, they taste like Eid - family, tradition, sharing and celebration.

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THROUGH THEIR EYES



Grandma used a grinding stone. Mom uses a mixer. The kitchen changed - the Paneer Butter Masala and the love didn't.



Sanskar Baranwal, Grade V

My First Recipe

One stool. Two spoons. A very important kitchen assistant.



Shambhavi Sharan,
Grade VIII

I made my first dish when I was in UKG. I wasn't tall enough to reach the kitchen slab, so I stood on a stool - and since I still couldn't reach the cabinet, I appointed my mother as my official helper!

Together, we chopped onions, carrots and chilli, roasted peanuts and mixed everything with cornflakes, chaat masala, lemon juice and coriander. My hands were too small to manage the bowl, so I used two spoons - with plenty of spilling along the way.

Then came the big moment. Papa took one bite and said, *"Shabaash! This is the best chaat I have ever had."* My sister whispered, *"Make it again and again."* I still have the photograph from that day. And somehow, my first cornflakes chaat still makes me smile.

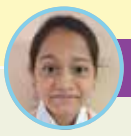
Mom switched off the TV at dinner today. I realised that when we stop scrolling, we don't just taste the food better. We notice the moments around it too



Niralya, Grade VI

When Mumma first taught me to make aloo parathas, mine wasn't round at all! She just smiled and told me to try again. As we cooked, we talked about school, family and stories from her childhood.

I thought she was teaching me a recipe. I later realised she was also teaching me patience, tradition and the joy of making something together. Even today, an aloo paratha tastes a little like home.



Adya Gupta, Grade 7

NOTE TO SELF: BEFORE YOU RIP OPEN THE LAY'S...

Yes, I love Lay's. Yes, the packet practically calls my name. And yes, I'll probably eat the chips anyway.

But first: turn the packet around. What else is in there besides potatoes? How much salt? How much fat? What are all those ingredients I usually ignore? **So, new rule for me - READ THE LABEL. THEN CRUNCH.**



Aradhya Singh, Grade VIII

More Than Tamarind Rice

Some dishes carry much more than flavour.



Jhari Sanvitha Rayasam,
Grade VIII

One of my favourite traditional dishes is tamarind rice. I love its tangy taste, of course, but I think I enjoy it even more because of everything that comes with it - sitting together with my family, sharing a meal and enjoying something that has been familiar to us for years. It made me realise that food can be much more than something we eat when we're hungry. Sometimes, what we love about a dish is also who we eat it with and the memories that grow around it.

Every family and community has foods like this. Recipes and cooking methods are passed from one generation to another - sometimes written down, and sometimes simply learnt by watching someone in the kitchen. That is why certain dishes appear again and again at festivals, weddings and family gatherings. We don't make them only because they taste good. We make them because "this is what we always make." And behind that simple sentence could be a tradition that has travelled through generations.

When families cook and eat together, they pass on more than recipes. They share stories, memories and little pieces of where they come from. For me, that connection can be found in something as simple as tamarind rice shared with my family. Because sometimes, a plate holds much more than food.

Home, by the Scoop



Irene Mary Sunil,
Grade XI



There are some foods you eat because you are hungry. **And then there are foods you eat because they feel like home. For me, it is ice cream!** I have eaten it on ordinary afternoons, on days when I came home tired from school, during celebrations, and even on days when nobody really felt like celebrating. Somehow, it always tasted different and yet exactly the same.

I remember watching my mother make it. The kitchen would slowly fill with people who claimed they were there to "help", but really, we were just waiting to sneak in a bite when she wasn't looking. I was certainly there to dash away with the biggest bowl I could get my hands on. What makes it special isn't really the ingredients. It is everything that can never be written into a recipe - the conversations in the kitchen, the arguments that somehow disappeared once the ice cream was ready, the extra serving pushed into my bowl because someone suddenly "didn't like ice cream", and a familiar voice saying, "Stop eating so much, you're such a glutton."

Maybe that is what food really means. A recipe can tell you how much milk to add. It can't tell you how many memories belong in a spoonful.

Years from now, I might forget the exact measurements. I might even forget what the kitchen looked like. But I don't think I will forget what it felt like to sit at that table, surrounded by the people I love, enjoying these ordinary moments before they quietly become memories.

Some foods fill your stomach. Some foods fill a place inside you that nothing else can reach. Well, ice cream does both!

This Much. And a Little More.



Diya Shyam,
Grade VIII

My mom is the best cook I have ever known. I know everybody says this because it is their mom, but in my case, I speak the truth.

Somehow, when she cooks, everything turns out just right. The taste, the smell, even the little things she adds without measuring. She just seems to know. And of everything she makes, there is one dish I can never get tired of: her biryani. For me, biryani isn't just rice, meat, spices and onions. It is the sound of my mom cooking in the kitchen. It is the smell slowly filling the house and reaching my room before she even calls me for lunch. It is lifting the lid and watching the steam escape, already knowing exactly what is waiting underneath. me really tastes like.

I've eaten biryani at restaurants, of course. Some of it has been really good. But somehow, it never tastes like hers.

Maybe the secret is her recipe. The problem is, I'm not entirely sure she has one. When I watch her cook, there are no perfectly measured teaspoons or carefully weighed ingredients. Instead, there is a lot of *"this much," "a little more"* and *"that's enough."*

How does she know? I have no idea. One day, I'd like to learn to make her biryani myself. I imagine writing everything down properly — exactly how much of each spice, what goes in first and what comes next.

Maybe, after enough attempts, I could get it right. But I'm beginning to think I never will. Because perhaps what makes my mother's biryani special isn't something that can be written into a recipe. It's the familiar smell coming from the kitchen, the excitement of knowing what's for lunch, and most of all, knowing exactly who is making it. **Maybe that's what home really tastes like.**

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I know Kadai Paneer is just a dish, but for me, it feels like family.

The moment I smell my mother cooking it, I know there's a meal I'm going to love waiting at the table. Maybe that's why it's my favourite- it comes with spice, flavour, conversations, laughter and memories all mixed together.



Lakshit Mishra, Grade VIII

Perhaps It Was Never About the Food



Shivashankar,
Grade XI

I have eaten the same food on different days and wondered how it could feel so different.

When I sit alone, eating becomes almost mechanical. I eat because I am hungry. A few minutes pass, the plate becomes empty, and the moment disappears without leaving much behind. But put the same food in front of me with my friends, and suddenly it becomes something else.

The food gets interrupted by conversations that make no sense, jokes that would sound ridiculous to anyone outside the group, arguments over the smallest things, and laughter that makes eating nearly impossible. Someone steals a fry without asking. Someone says they aren't hungry and then eats from everyone else's plate. And somehow, lunch is over before we realise it.

Nobody remembers exactly what they ate, yet everyone remembers how it felt to be there.

Perhaps that is what makes eating together so special. We may think we are meeting for lunch or sitting down because we are hungry, but often the food is only the beginning. The plate becomes an excuse to stay together a little longer.

So many memories are built this way — around birthday cakes, family dinners, school lunch breaks, roadside stops and snacks shared between friends. Sometimes it isn't the food we remember at all. It is the people who were there when we ate it.

Years from now, I probably won't remember what I ate on an ordinary school afternoon, whether the sandwich was good or whether the drink was cold.

But I might remember the person sitting opposite me, laughing so hard they couldn't speak. I might remember the ridiculous conversation. I might remember how, for a few minutes, nobody was worried about the next class, the next exam or tomorrow.

Maybe this is what lies beyond the plate.
Food fills the stomach. But sometimes, the people around it fill a moment of our lives so completely that we carry it long after the food is gone.

The Food That Waits



Sai Sagan,
Grade I

Every night, one chapati is kept inside a small box. I used to think it was just another chapati.

One night, I asked Amma, *"Why do you keep it?"* She smiled and said, *"It's for Papa. He will come home late."* I looked at the chapati and wondered. It was warm when Amma made it. Now it was quietly waiting. **Can food wait for someone?**

When Papa came home, he ate it and smiled. I felt happy. It was made with Amma's hands and kept for Papa with love. **Maybe food can say things that we cannot say.**

Who Gets The Last Piece?





Medhansh Rai,
Grade VIII

At every family potluck, there's one thing everyone waits for - **Grandma's mango pickle.**

The jar arrives. Everyone gathers.
And very quickly, the pickle disappears.
Then comes the real problem - Who gets the last piece?

We've all tried recreating her recipe. Same mangoes. Same spices. But somehow, it never tastes quite the same. Maybe Grandma has a secret ingredient. Or maybe some recipes just belong to the person who makes them.

THE KULCHA CASE

FIR No. 420
Kulcha-In-Textbook/2026



Manvik Sethi,
Editorial Board | Grade XI

When It Rains, I Think of Pakodas



Kyra Rajnish
Grade VII

Forget the rain. My Dadi's kitchen was where all the fun was happening.

I was her official assistant. My job began with slicing red onions, which made my eyes water like crazy. Dadi would just laugh and tell me that crying made my eyesight sharper!

My favourite part was taking ajwain and coriander seeds and rubbing them hard between my palms. They smelled so good and woody before I dropped them into the bowl of besan. Then came the pakoras. Dadi would drop the messy onion batter into the super-hot oil using just her fingers. The moment they turned golden brown, I had to hand her the big metal strainer spoon. Of course, I always tried to steal one early. She would playfully smack my hand away - only to blow on a crispy one a little later and feed it to me and my sister anyway.



We would sit by the window eating our hot **pyaaz ke pakode** while the rain banged against the glass.

Now that I live far away, rain feels a little different. **Because every time it rains, somewhere in my head, I'm back in Dadi's kitchen.**

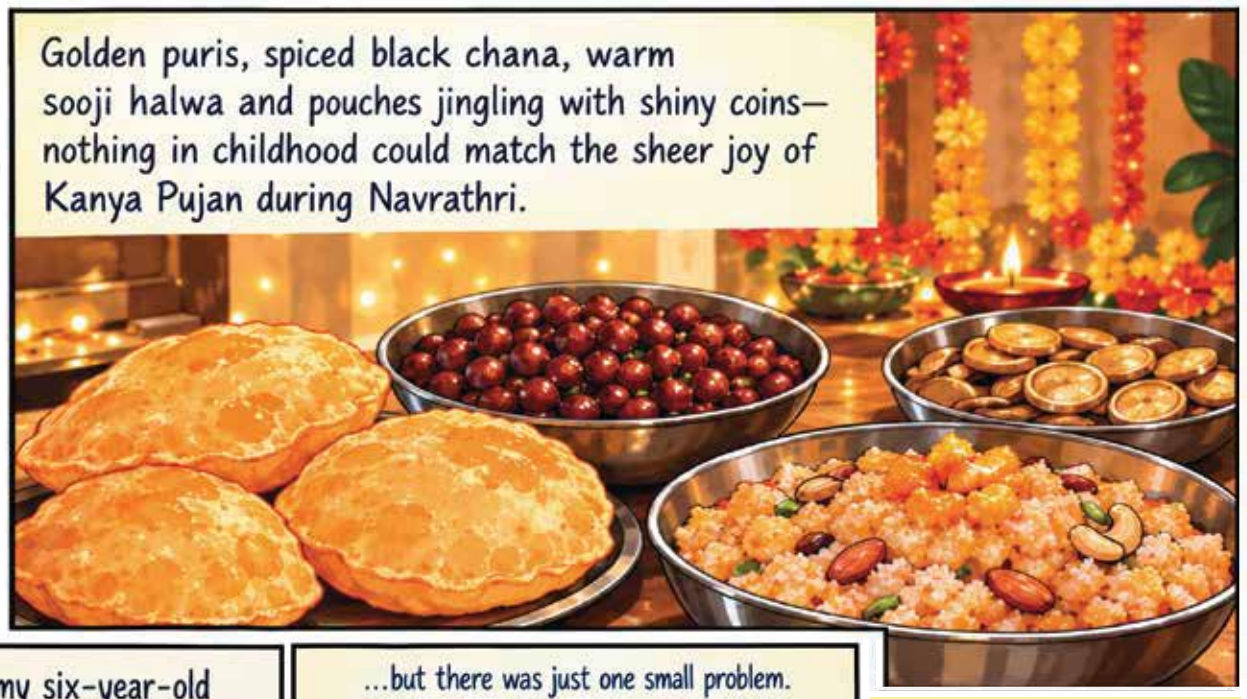
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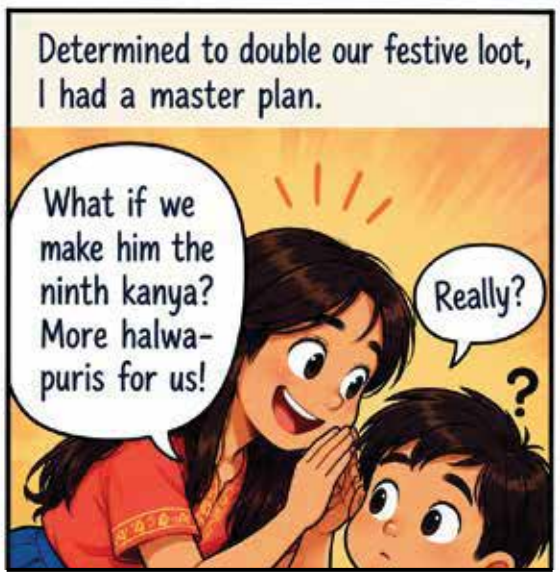
THROUGH THEIR EYES

The Great Halwa-Puri Jugaad

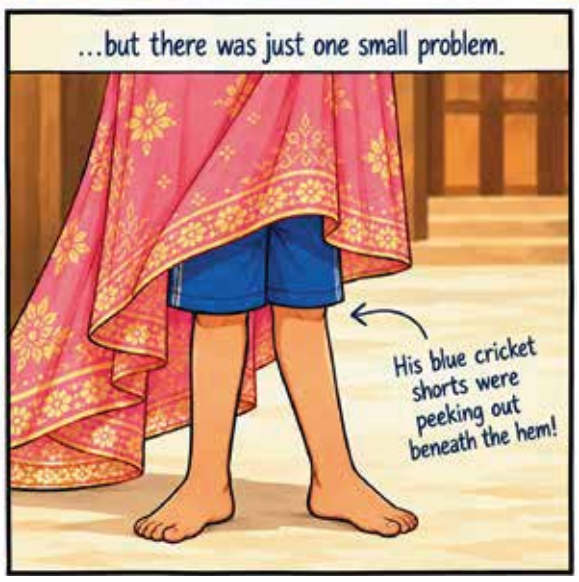


Lakshita Kansal,
Editorial Board, Grade IX









AND THEN HE WALKED IN...

One brother. One pink dupatta. Zero chance this ends quietly.
What happened next? You tell us!

Scan the QR, drop your ending in the comments.

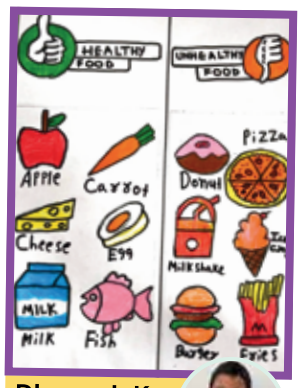
We'll pick our favourite endings. Follow **@TheVoicesBEYOND** to see who wins.



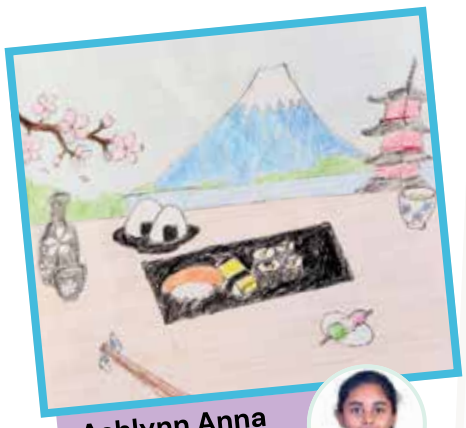
Bhanvi, Grade VII



Sonakshi Jain, Grade IX



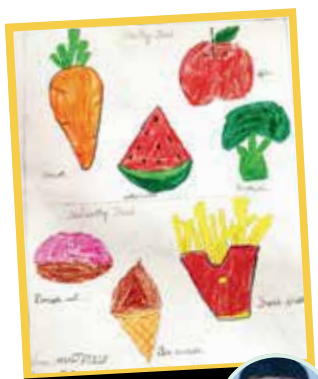
Dhanush K, Grade I



Ashlynn Anna Joby, Grade VII



Nia Marie Siju, Grade IX



Mahit Reddy, Grade I



K S Ishitha, Grade X



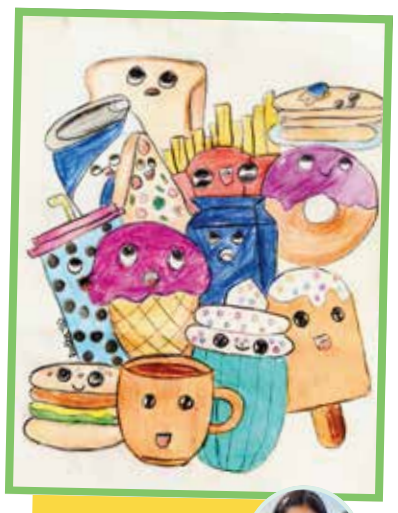
Hithesrii Choudary Andra, Grade VI



Keerthana, Grade XII



Adhrit Sharma, Grade IV



Radha Vaidya, Grade VI



Prajeet Samarth, Grade IX

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Interactive Corner

Spot The Odd Plate Out



One tiny detail has changed. Can you find it?
7 differences. 60 seconds. GO!



UNSCRAMBLE THE MENU

Someone made a complete mess of the menu. Can you fix it?

1	FLEWAF → _____		7	URBRGE → _____	
2	OATC → _____		8	HISUS → _____	
3	HCTUNYE → _____		9	OICHM → _____	
4	EDOONSL → _____		10	CIGLAR → _____	
5	PONPCOR → _____		11	RRUCHOS → _____	
6	ESKCEAEHCE → _____		12	OKDHAL → _____	

1. Waffle 2. Taco 3. Chutney 4. Noodles 5. Popcorn 6. Cheesecake 7. Burger 8. Sushi 9. Mochi 10. Garlic 11. Churros 12. Dhokla

Food For Thought

Use the clues to complete the crossword.



Across

1. Every yoghurt, cereal and snack bar seems to want more of me these days.
4. Ancient grain. Very modern comeback.
6. I turn ordinary batter bubbly, tangy and ready for a dosa transformation.
8. I can sit quietly in a jar for months and still steal the show at lunch
10. A few taps, a little waiting... and dinner appears at your door.
12. I may make you cry, but your curry would miss me terribly.

Down

2. I travelled all the way from the Americas — and now Indian food can hardly imagine life without me.
3. Soft. Steamed. Round. And very happy beside a bowl of sambar.
5. Crack me, boil me, scramble me — breakfast knows me well.
7. Grated, ground, squeezed or cracked — South Indian kitchens find plenty of work for me.
9. While everyone else is enjoying dinner, I'm probably still in the kitchen.
11. Sweet, creamy and often the reason you somehow find room after a huge Kerala meal.

WAIT... THAT CAME FROM WHERE?

Think you know your food?

Match each food to where its story began. Write the correct letter in the circle.

WHAT'S ON THE PLATE?			WHERE DID THE STORY BEGIN?	
1	CHILLI	◯	A	The Andes, South America
2	POTATO	◯	B	Ethiopia
3	TOMATO	◯	C	Mexico / The Americas
4	COFFEE	◯	D	Upper Amazon, South America
5	CACAO	◯	E	Southwest China · Northern Myanmar · Northeast India
6	TEA	◯	F	Middle Eastern / Central Asian food traditions
7	SAMOSA	◯	G	Goa — with Portuguese roots
8	VINDALOO	◯	H	South America → Mexico

1–C • 2–A • 3–H • 4–B • 5–D • 6–E • 7–F • 8–G

1.Protein 2.Chilli 3.Idli 4.Millet 5.Egg 6.Fermentation 7. Coconut 8.Pickle 9.Chef 10.Delivery 11.Payasam 12.Onion

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Beyond The Plate

Dish It Out!

One fruit. One bowl. Zero cooking.



Sreelakshmi C,
Editorial Board

Crunchy, tangy, a little bit cheeky. Make this at home, then add one twist that makes it yours: a surprise spice, a fancy crunch, or the family trick nobody wrote down.

The Easy Guava Salad

Ingredients

- 2 ripe-but-firm guavas, sliced thin
- ½ cucumber, diced
- 1 small red onion, finely sliced
- Juice of 1 lime
- ½ tsp chaat masala (or a pinch of salt and pepper)
- A handful of fresh mint or coriander

Method

- Slice everything.
- Toss it all in a bowl.
- Squeeze, sprinkle, mix.
- Eat immediately. Seriously.





Send us:
📸 **A photo of your bowl** 💡 **Your twist** ❤️ **Let us know your verdict.**

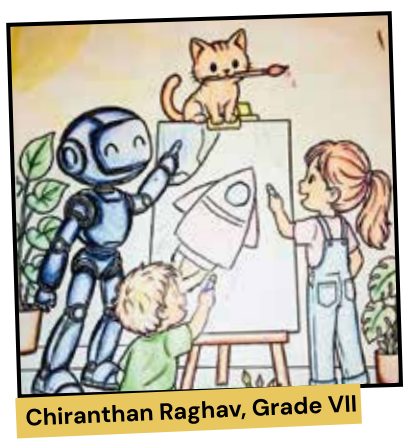
Selected creations may appear in the next edition of BEYOND.
Complete your recipe, snap a photo and **WhatsApp it to +91 95381 11188.**

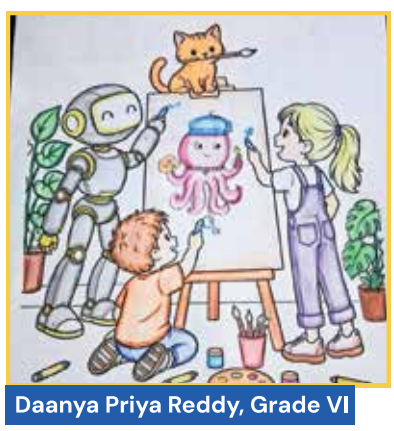
Colour Beyond the Lines

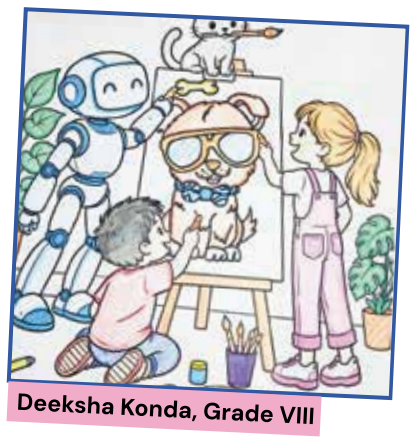
We drew the lines. You added the magic. Here are your featured creations.


Aadya Kundapura, Grade IV


Aastha Saani


Chiranthan Raghav, Grade VII


Daanya Priya Reddy, Grade VI


Deeksha Konda, Grade VIII

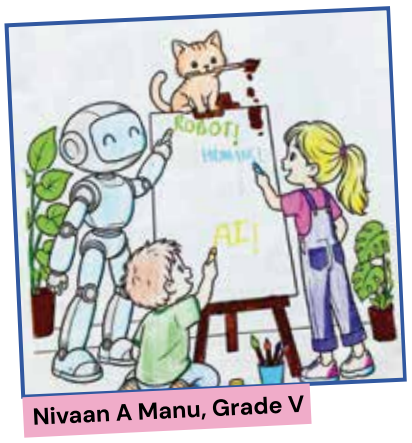

Deekshita Mishra, Grade V


Divija Verma, Grade V

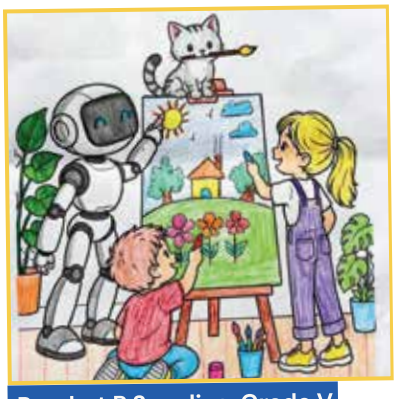

Hashika, Grade V


Diyara, Grade II


Hitasini, Grade III


Nivaan A Manu, Grade V


Norah, Grade VII

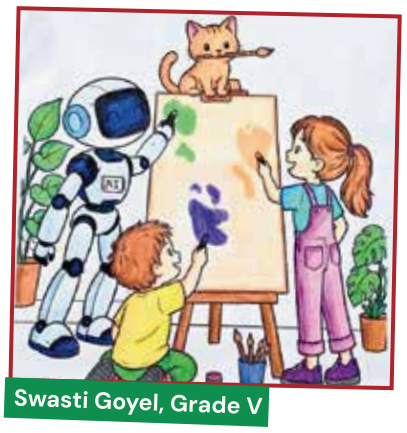

Prachet P Sapaliga, Grade V

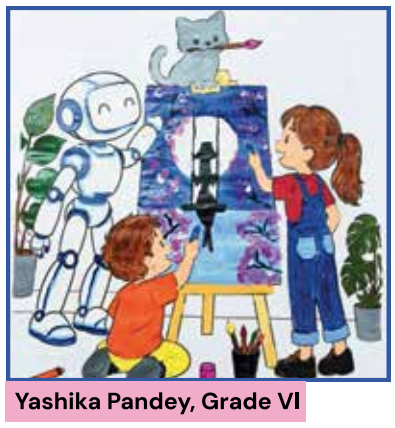

Samyak Jain, Grade VI

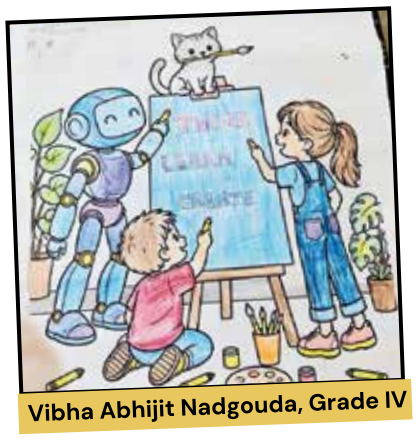

Samrita Sudhagar, Grade VIII


Shanya Singhal, Grade IV


Shivansh Paul, Grade II


Swasti Goyel, Grade V


Yashika Pandey, Grade VI


Vibha Abhijit Nadgouda, Grade IV

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THOUGHT WE WERE DONE TALKING ABOUT FOOD?

NOT QUITE. BOO!

We've spent this edition exploring everything beyond the plate. But before we go, we have one last treat for our littlest foodies!



Get Ready for THE BIG HALLOWEEN PARTY

Think cupcakes with a monstrous makeover, costumes that deserve a parade, stories with a little BOO!, mystery treats, crafty surprises and dance moves that could steal the show!

31 OCTOBER 2026
AGES 3–7 YEARS

SOUNDS LIKE YOUR KIND OF TROUBLE?

Make it spooky-bright! Colour it, snap a photo and WhatsApp it to

+91 9538111188

BEYOND THE PLATE. INTO THE PARTY!